



Links Players

Living with Passion

... I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace. (Acts 20:24)

After fifty-plus years of friendship, I lost a good friend to cancer earlier this year. His name was Paul, but to many of his close friends, he was simply known as Pablo. There were many things about Pablo that made me smile.

His corny jokes, his continual complaints, his infectious laugh. But one thing that really stood out to me was his passion. Pablo had a passion for family, friends, and life in general. But I’m prompted to write about his passion for golf.

It was evident when he told you that he’d made not just one but two holes in one. And it was on display every summer when five of us would converge for a two-day tournament, with a traveling trophy to the winner.

As the date approached each year, you could bank on receiving numerous emails and texts from Pablo. He would inform us, in very descriptive and colorful language, that he was going to win the trophy; in fact, to save time we might as well engrave his name now.

We all got a good laugh at Pablo’s boasting, because that was just one of the many ways he showed his passion. And passion directed in the right way is a very good thing.

In the New Testament, we read about another man who had passion, a fellow also named Paul. His passion was misdirected at first, but a life-changing event prompted a 180-degree turn in the opposite direction. And it’s the life he lived after the change that we remember him today.

Most of you have probably heard Paul’s story. He was originally known as Saul of Tarsus, a passionate Pharisee if there ever was one. In the early days of Christianity, as the followers of Jesus were growing in number, Saul became focused on persecuting them to the point of extermination.

He was present at the brutal stoning of Stephen, the first Christian martyr. Acts 8:1 opens with the following sentence: “And Saul approved of his execution.”

In the very next chapter of Acts, Saul was on his way to Damascus with documents authorizing him to seize followers of Jesus when a miracle occurred. He was blinded as he heard the voice of Jesus saying “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”

He was led to Damascus, where he was transformed from being blind to having sight. More importantly, he was transformed from Saul, the persecutor of Christians, to Paul, the man who boldly

proclaimed Christ crucified and who became known as “a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles.” (Romans 15:16). This transformation, from a persecutor to a proclaimer, is a powerful testament to the potential of change in our lives.

Paul’s passion for sharing the good news of the gospel was unmatched. He’s credited as the author of thirteen books in the New Testament. Most biblical scholars agree that Paul traveled over 10,000 miles on his various missionary journeys. He continually put his life at risk to share the good news of the gospel and ultimately was beheaded for his passion.

Paul's dedication to sharing the gospel, even at the cost of his life, is a powerful reminder of the importance of sharing our faith. Paul wrote many memorable Scripture verses, and one in particular sums up the essence of his passion: “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” (Philippians 1:21). Let’s pray that all of us who claim Christ as Lord will strive to passionately share the good news with others.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, may the passion of your servant Paul inspire us to courageously proclaim the gospel message with others.

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John Bown

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